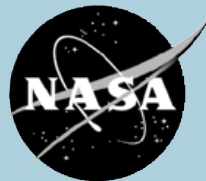
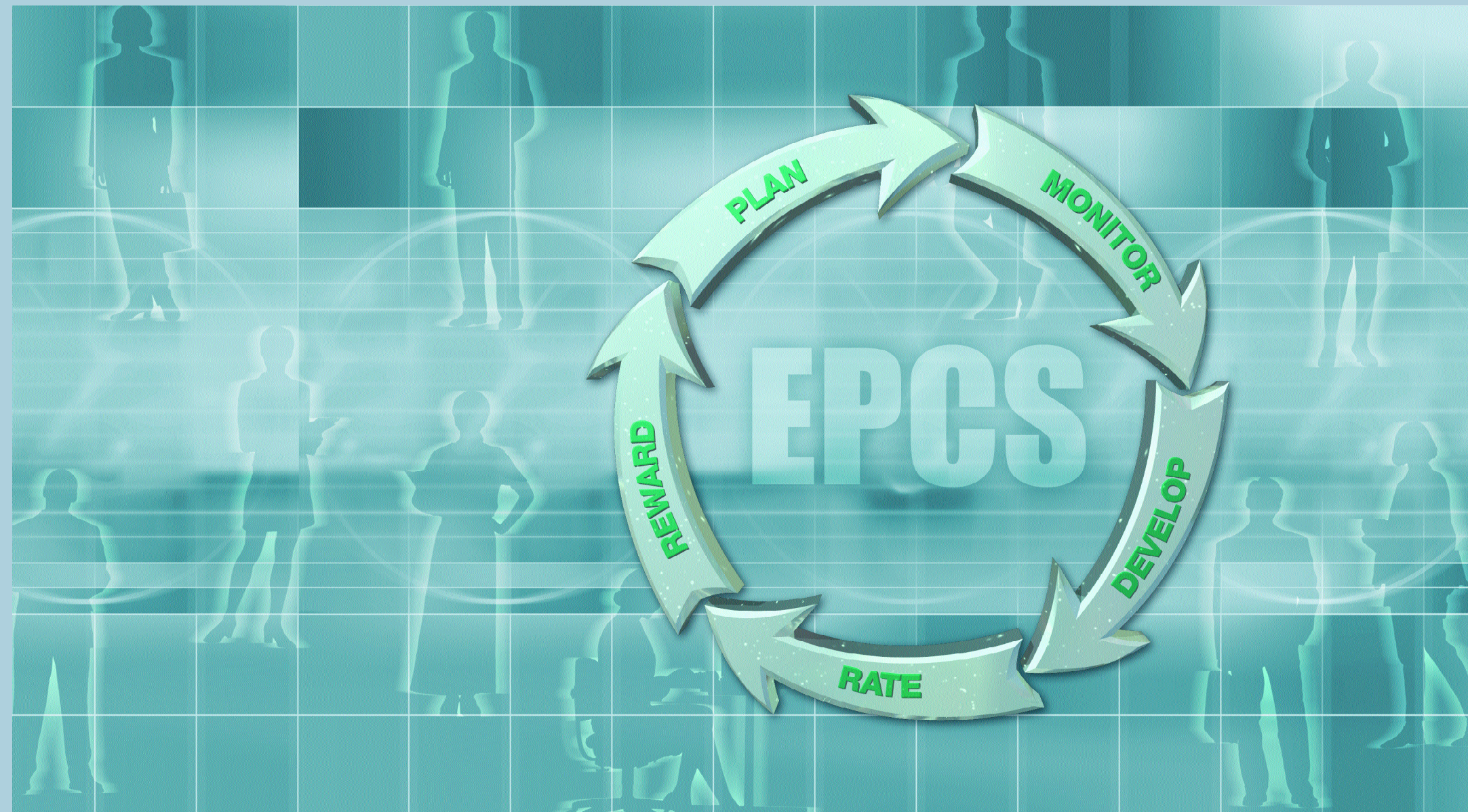


Enhancing

The NASA Employee Performance Communication System



National Aeronautics
and Space Administration

NASA Office of Human Capital Management
Washington, DC 20546

<http://nasapeople.nasa.gov/perform/index.htm>

NP-2004-06-373-HQ

“NASA achieves excellence by valuing and recognizing performance in an environment in which all employees feel encouraged to contribute.”

SHCP Performance Culture Goal

Message from Vicki A. Novak, Chief Human Capital Officer

NASA values the diversity of thought, perspective, and talent that resides in our greatest asset—our workforce. An inclusive One NASA environment is critical to success—an environment in which each and every employee understands how his/her day-to-day work supports NASA’s Mission and is treated fairly, respected by management and peers, and valued for his/her contribution to the Agency’s mission.

The men and women of NASA achieve remarkable things every day. We constantly strive to keep pace with that level of achievement by ensuring that our employees are appropriately recognized for their contributions through a performance management system that focuses on accountability for results.

We hope these enhancements to the NASA Employee Performance Communication System will continue to support the personal and organizational excellence of which we are so proud.

Vicki A. Novak



Continuing the Quest to Improve Our Performance Culture— Enhancing The Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS)

NASA's innovative human capital strategy has contributed to a performance culture that focuses on accountability for results. Our next task is to ensure that we continue to recognize and reward the remarkable accomplishments of our world-class workforce in every way possible. To do so, we have developed the following two-pronged strategy:

- We continue to implement those systems that best support our performance culture.
- We seize every opportunity and means to recognize and reward the outstanding performance of our employees that results from this culture.

In order to achieve the second result, it is imperative that we also attend to the first.

We have enhanced our current EPCS. These enhancements will not only allow us to provide greater recognition and reward to our top non-Senior Executive Service (SES) employees* today through the Agency's Awards and Recognition Program, but will enable our participation in the Administration's pay-for-performance initiatives as they become available in the future. We want to take advantage of every opportunity to appropriately reward our employees' accomplishments toward the achievement of the Agency's Vision, Mission, and goals.

The enhancements outlined in this guide serve the Agency's Mission by:

- reinforcing our dedication to the NASA Values of Safety, The NASA Family, Excellence, and Integrity in everything we do;
- advancing our commitment to One NASA by creating a common set of performance expectations for all employees; and
- supporting the Agency's *Strategic Human Capital Plan* (SHCP) to promote a performance culture that focuses on two-way communication and accountability for results and clearly differentiates between high and low performers.

* Excludes Senior Scientific and Technical (ST) and Senior Level (SL) employees who will be covered by a separate Agency performance management system under development.



Summary of the Enhancements to the EPCS

- Establishes a One NASA performance appraisal period and performance plan and appraisal form.
- Cascades the SES performance evaluation factors to all employees, establishing minimum performance element requirements.
- Forms an employee-supervisor partnership for the establishment of performance expectations and the identification of performance accomplishments.
- Includes both critical and noncritical elements in the performance plan.
- Creates the following three levels of performance rating definitions:
 - Performance Element Rating Levels**
 - Significantly Exceeds Expectations
 - Meets or Exceeds Expectations
 - Fails to Meet Expectations
 - Performance Summary Rating Levels**
 - Distinguished
 - Meets or Exceeds Expectations
 - Fails to Meet Expectations
- Modifies awards eligibility to be responsive to the three-level performance summary rating system.



Enhancements to the EPCS

One NASA Actions

Agencywide Appraisal Period

In order to continue our progress toward creating One NASA, we are instituting an Agencywide appraisal period that begins each year on May 1 and ends April 30 of the following year. The first Agencywide appraisal period will be implemented mid-cycle on October 1, 2004, and end April 30, 2005.

Standard Agencywide Forms

Also in the spirit of fostering One NASA, an Agencywide performance plan and appraisal form has been created that is available electronically. This form addresses the minimum requirements for performance elements and standards that cascade from the SES performance evaluation factors.

Cascading Objectives

Each employee's performance elements and standards have been cascaded from the SES performance evaluation factors, resulting in a common set of performance expectations for all NASA employees. This ensures that each and every employee understands how his/her day-to-day work supports NASA's Mission. Employee accomplishments will be considered during the performance evaluation process of SES executives. Just as performance expectations cascade throughout the Agency, so too will accomplishments bubble up and contribute to the achievement of our One NASA performance goals.



EPCS Revisions

Three Rating Levels

We have introduced a three-level performance summary rating system that consists of *Distinguished*, *Meets or Exceeds Expectations*, and *Fails to Meet Expectations*. The highest level (*Distinguished*) is designed to recognize top performers whose performance *Significantly Exceeds Expectations* for all elements, whether they are designated critical or noncritical.

Performance Elements

We recognize that not all performance elements are created equal. Some are critical, and unacceptable performance in a critical element would result in an overall performance summary rating of *Fails to Meet Expectations*. Other elements describe a dimension of an employee's performance, whether working individually or as a team member, which (while important) may or may not be critical. Each performance plan must include at least one critical element. Whether critical or noncritical, performance elements will be individually assigned a performance element rating of *Significantly Exceeds Expectations*, *Meets or Exceeds Expectations*, or *Fails to Meet Expectations*. The performance summary rating will be based upon all rated elements of the performance plan, but a *Fails to Meet Expectations* performance element rating on a noncritical element will not result in a *Fails to Meet Expectations* overall performance summary rating.

Performance Standards and Indicators

Because our standards are broad statements of expected accomplishments or behaviors, it is necessary to identify more specific performance thresholds, requirements, or expectations to communicate what an employee has to do or achieve to meet the standard. These are called performance indicators. Performance indicators have been identified for each performance element and standard. Because the performance indicators may or may not apply to an employee and/or his/her position, they can be accepted as written or modified to reflect more accurately the expectations for the employee and his/her position. In addition, both the employee and supervisor may suggest additional or alternative performance indicators. When possible, performance indicators should identify the measures that will be used to evaluate the employee's performance. Measures that are appropriate for all employees are external effectiveness (quality and quantity) and internal efficiency (timeliness and cost-effectiveness). Depending on a supervisor's position, the measures of customer satisfaction, employee involvement and innovation, and business results may be used. The important thing is that each standard must include a sufficient number of performance indicators written at the *Meets Expectations* level to clearly communicate the performance expectations to the employee.



Performance Indicator Guidelines

- A performance indicator identifies a requirement or expectation to communicate what an employee has to do or achieve to meet the standard.
- Each performance element and standard has identified performance indicators.
- A performance indicator can be accepted as written or modified to more accurately reflect the performance expectation for the employee and his/her position.
- Employees and supervisors may suggest additional or alternative performance indicators.
- A performance indicator should, when possible, identify the measures that will be used to evaluate the employee's performance.
- Each standard must include a sufficient number of performance indicators written at the *Meets Expectations* level to clearly communicate the performance expectations to the employee.

Sample Performance Indicators

For Collaboration and Teamwork

- Knowledge of best practices and lessons learned are, to the extent possible, shared with others. (One NASA behavior)

For Communications

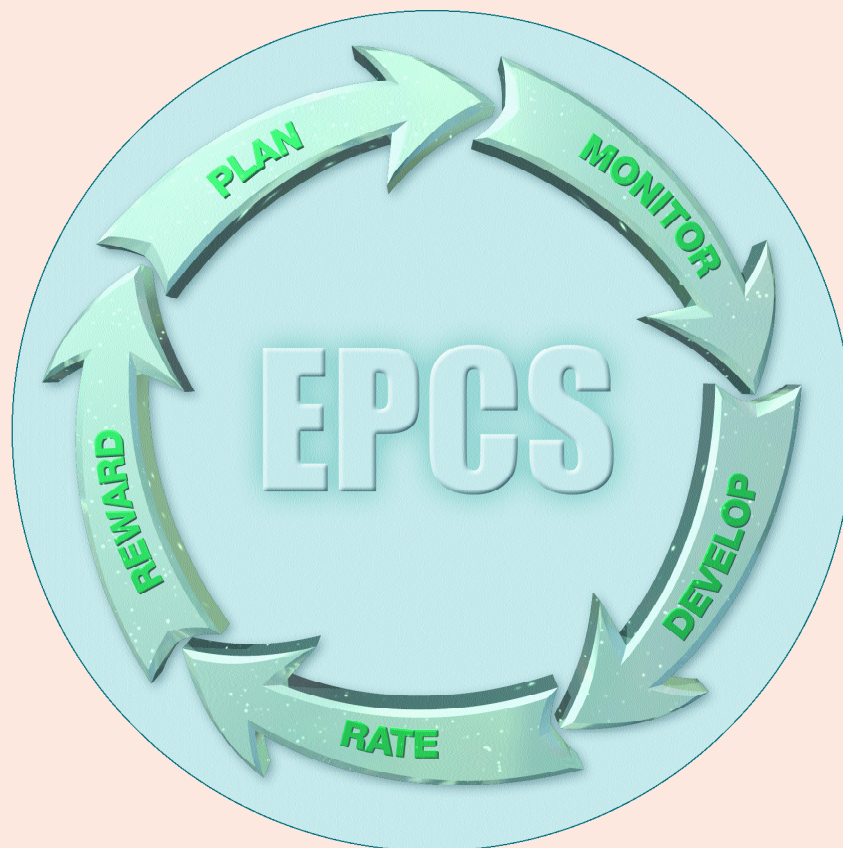
- Information is usually accurate and effectively presented (e.g., presented in a clear, concise, and well-organized manner). (Quality)
- Written materials generally follow NASA's prescribed standards and style, and are infrequently returned for substantial revision. (Quality)

For Work Objectives

- Assignments are generally completed by assigned deadlines. (Timeliness)
- The quality of work generally meets expectations, and major revisions are rarely necessary. (Quality)

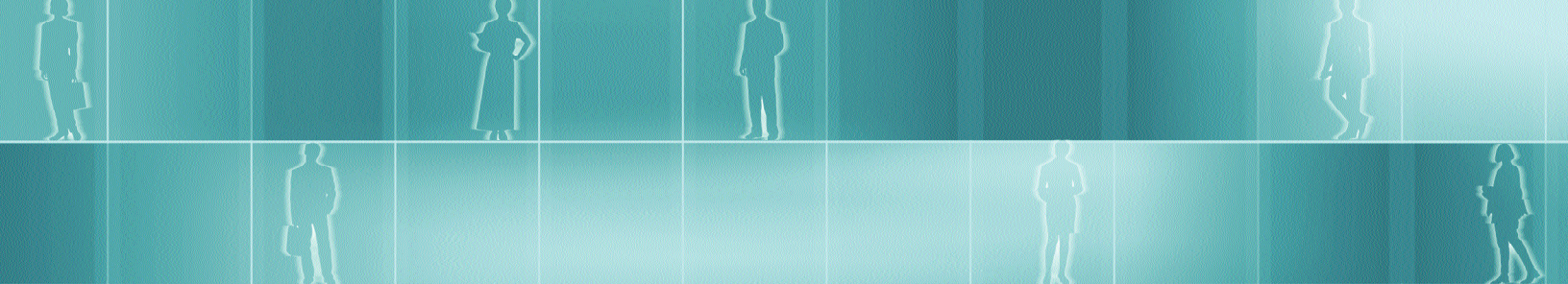
Our Greatest Strength—The Employee-Supervisor Partnership

The single greatest determinant of organization success is found in the strength of the relationship between the employee and supervisor. We, therefore, want all NASA employees to be fully engaged partners with their supervisors throughout the performance management process.



Planning—Both the employee and supervisor should work together to establish the performance elements, standards, and performance indicators relative to the employee; however, supervisors will make the final decision as to what is ultimately addressed by the performance plan.

Monitoring—Ongoing two-way communication between the employee and supervisor is key to improving individual and organizational performance. It is the supervisor's responsibility to have at least one midterm progress review with each employee. We encourage employees to initiate conversations throughout the appraisal period to assess how they are doing and to receive constructive feedback.



Developing—We encourage employees to assess, together with the supervisor, training and development needs, requirements, and desires. By doing this, a more complete picture of an employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities emerges from which the employee and supervisor can plan to fill any competency gaps as well as identify educational, development, and growth opportunities.

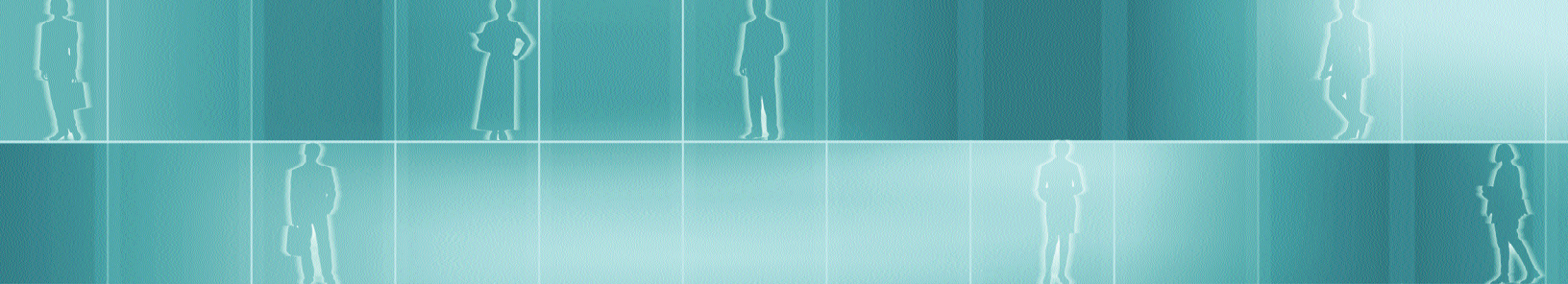
Rating—Identifying specific accomplishments and results together should contribute to both the employee's and supervisor's acceptance that the performance summary rating is fair and accurate. Our goal is that there will be no surprises at this point in the process and that both parties will have the opportunity to address performance, both good and that which is lacking, throughout the appraisal period. We expect the performance summary rating of *Distinguished* to be assigned only in those cases where the employee's performance truly *Significantly Exceeds Expectations* and identifies him/her as one of the Agency's top performers among our cadre of high-performing employees.

Rewarding—When the employee and supervisor act in partnership throughout the entire performance management process, recognizing and rewarding good performance at the end of the appraisal period is the natural next step that is understood and supported by all. Recognizing and rewarding our employees' performance and contributions to the achievement of the Agency's Mission and goals is just another aspect of our performance culture.

Awards and Eligibility—The enhanced EPCS allows us to reward employees who achieve performance summary ratings as follows:

- **Distinguished**—is eligible for all monetary awards (including a Quality Step Increase) and nonmonetary recognition.
- **Meets or Exceeds Expectations**—is eligible for all monetary awards (excluding a Quality Step Increase) and nonmonetary recognition based on performance, provided that **all** rated elements (critical and noncritical) have been rated *Meets or Exceeds Expectations*.

An employee who receives a *Fails to Meet Expectations* performance rating for any element (critical or noncritical) is not eligible for monetary awards or nonmonetary recognition based on performance.



“NASA creates a culture that focuses on results, motivates employees to perform, and ensures fairness in the workplace.”

SHCP Performance Culture Goal

EPCS—How Did We Do?

At the end of the first appraisal period (April 30, 2005) we will assess the enhanced EPCS. We want to ensure that:

- our performance measures are adequate;
- employees perceive the process to be fair;
- performance appraisals accurately reflect the level of performance;
- the three rating levels make meaningful distinctions in performance;
- the EPCS is integrated with and supports the Agency’s Awards and Recognition Program;
- the distribution of performance awards matches the distribution of performance summary rating levels; and
- the EPCS continues to support our performance culture.

Planning

Employee Responsibilities

- Provide input to supervisor during development of performance plan
- If necessary, suggest additional performance elements, standards, and performance indicators

Supervisor Responsibilities

- Include employee in development of his/her performance plan—provide draft of plan before finalizing
- If necessary, identify additional performance elements, standards, and performance indicators

Monitoring

- Request a progress review during the appraisal period when feedback is desired
- Provide input to supervisor for midterm progress review
- Keep supervisor informed of work activities

- Conduct at least one midterm performance progress review
- Regularly communicate with and provide encouragement, constructive feedback, and appreciation to employee

Developing

- Identify and discuss training, development, and growth opportunities

- Identify and discuss training, development, and growth opportunities
- Address performance deficiencies as they occur; provide guidance for performance improvement and take corrective action if needed

Rating

- Provide examples of work accomplishments and results for annual appraisal discussion

- Ask employee to provide examples of work accomplishments during appraisal period
- Prepare written narrative and assign performance summary rating
- Discuss annual performance appraisal with employee

Rewarding

- Be knowledgeable about awards
- Provide encouragement and express appreciation to fellow employees

- Grant performance awards, as appropriate
- Strive to reward employee in timely manner
- If appropriate, nominate employee for other awards throughout year

As a supervisor, what are my responsibilities?

Become familiar with the Agency performance plan and appraisal form and know where to find it electronically.

Establish your employees' performance plans at the beginning of the appraisal period or within 30 days of an employee's assignment to a position within your organization.

Include your employees in the development of their performance plans.

- If necessary, identify additional performance elements, standards, and performance indicators relative to an employee's duties.
- Provide a draft of the plan to the employee and request input/feedback.
- If necessary, discuss employee's feedback prior to finalizing the plan.
- Finalize the plan and discuss it with the employee to ensure that:
 - you clearly communicate to the employee what you expect of him/her relative to his/her performance, and
 - the employee understands how his/her plan and work assignments are linked to achieving the organization's strategic goals and objectives.
- At the conclusion of this discussion, sign and date the Agency performance plan and appraisal form after the employee has done so.

As a supervisor, lead by example and work in accordance with your performance standards.

- Consider your safety, the safety of others, and NASA's valuable assets first in everything that you do, and create an environment where your employees and contractors feel free to raise health and safety concerns without fear of retribution.
- Show respect for and value the individual and cultural differences of your employees, and expect that they do the same to ensure a working environment that is free of discrimination and harassment of any kind.
- Look for opportunities to collaborate and work with others in the accomplishment of your work assignments and that of your employees.
- Be open and honest, yet sensitive, to the individual and cultural differences of those with whom you interact, and respectfully listen to and give full and fair consideration to the views and divergent opinions of your employees and others.
- Ensure that your work assignments and those of your employees are accomplished in the most efficient and effective manner possible to meet the internal or external commitments that have been made.
- Seek opportunities for training and development to broaden your Agency perspective.

Regularly communicate, provide encouragement and constructive feedback, and show appreciation to your employees, individually and as a group.

If necessary, address an employee's performance deficiencies as they occur; provide guidance for performance improvement and take corrective action if needed.

Conduct at least one midterm performance progress review with each of your employees.

- Ask each employee for input relative to his/her performance elements and standards; retain as part of his/her appraisal documentation in the official Employee Performance File.
- Provide constructive feedback on your employee's performance.
- Discuss his/her training and development needs and requirements, and, if appropriate, growth opportunities.
- At the conclusion of this discussion, sign and date the Agency performance plan and appraisal form after the employee has done so.

After the end of the appraisal period, schedule a meeting with each of your employees to discuss his/her annual performance assessment.

- Prior to the meeting and before completing the written narrative, ask each employee for input (e.g., examples of work accomplishments and results) relative to his/her performance elements and standards; retain as part of his/her appraisal documentation in the official Employee Performance File.
- Prepare the written narrative, assign a performance summary rating, sign and date the Agency performance plan and appraisal form, and, if required, obtain approval, signature, and date from the reviewing official on the form.
- Meet with the employee and provide constructive feedback on his/her performance and the performance summary rating assigned for the appraisal period.
- Once again, discuss his/her training and development needs and requirements, and, if appropriate, growth opportunities.
- Ask the employee what motivates him/her at work.
- At the conclusion of this discussion, have the employee sign and date the Agency performance plan and appraisal form and file appropriately in the official Employee Performance File.

As appropriate, recognize and reward your employees.

- Ensure that all of your employees, regardless of cultural diversity, gender, grade, or occupation, are considered for awards when they meet the award criteria.
- When recognizing an employee with an award or an award nomination, communicate to all of your employees why you are doing so.
- Strive to reward an employee in a timely manner (e.g., as close to the time of the employee's contribution for which he/she is being recognized).
- Take the time to nominate an employee if he/she is deserving of recognition and meets the award criteria for the various Agencywide and Center-specific awards.

NOTE: This is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of your responsibilities.

As an employee, what are my responsibilities?

Become familiar with the Agency performance plan and appraisal form and know where to find it electronically.

Participate in the development of your performance plan.

- Provide input/feedback to your supervisor on the draft of the plan.
- If necessary, suggest additional performance elements, standards, and performance indicators relative to your duties.
- Be sure you understand how your performance plan and work assignments contribute to the achievement of the organization's strategic goals and objectives.
- At the conclusion of this discussion, sign and date the Agency performance plan and appraisal form.

Work in accordance with the performance standards you and your supervisor created.

- Consider your safety, the safety of others, and NASA's valuable assets first in everything that you do.
- Look for opportunities to collaborate and work with others in the accomplishment of your work assignments.
- Be open and honest, yet sensitive, to the individual and cultural differences of those with whom you interact.
- Complete your work assignments in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Regularly keep your supervisor informed of your work activities and performance accomplishments.

- At any time, initiate a performance discussion/progress review with your supervisor.
- Ask for clarification and guidance if needed.
- Ask for and be receptive to feedback relative to your performance.
- Discuss your training needs, requirements, and desires.

Participate in your required midterm progress review.

- Provide input, relative to your performance elements and standards, to your supervisor.
- Discuss with your supervisor your training and development requirements, needs, and desires, and, if applicable, opportunities for growth.
- At the conclusion of this discussion, sign and date the Agency performance plan and appraisal form.

Participate in your annual appraisal discussion.

- Provide examples of your work accomplishments and results for the appraisal period to your supervisor.
- Once again, discuss with your supervisor your training and development requirements, needs, and desires, and, if applicable, opportunities for growth.
- Discuss with your supervisor what motivates you at work.
- At the conclusion of this discussion, sign and date the Agency performance plan and appraisal form.

Provide encouragement and express appreciation to those you work with every day.

NOTE: This is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of your responsibilities.

